

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Major General Kevin J. Bergner, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq
Dr. Tahseen al-Sheikhly, Civilian Spokesman, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon**

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PARTICIPANTS:

**Major General Kevin Bergner
Dr. Tahseen al-Sheikhly**

REPORTERS:

**Ahmed Jassem from Al-Arabiya
Howard LaFrankie[ph] with The Christian Science Monitor
Alek[ph] Fran[ph]. Biladi TV
Alexandra Zavis from The Los Angeles Times
Katy[ph] Arran[ph] from National Public Radio**

**Unidentified reporters from Radio Sawa, Hiba[ph] Agency, BBC, and Zaman
Newspaper.**

REPORTERS 1-13

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

UNIDENTIFIED: [2:01] [Speaks in Arabic and then translates in English.]

Cell phones on silent, please. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED: [7:13] [Speaks in Arabic and then translates in English.]

There's a ten minutes delay. Thank you.

DR AL-SHEIKHLI:
INT:

[16:17] [Speaks in Arabic.]

Hello everyone and welcome to this press conference. And I am honored today to be with General Bergner, the official spokesman for Multi-National Forces. Today we will talk about what's going on regarding the basic services and reconstruction in Eastern Baghdad and generally...especially in Sadr City in particular. Of course the military operations that are now in Sadr City in addition to the activities of the criminal gangs that try in a certain time to force a siege to...on this city and this contributed largely to the lagging process of providing...or giving the basic services. But at the same time, the government is determined and the coalition forces also helps us to provide the best services to those people. All those people have rights and we are committed to take care of those people and we will not allow those criminal gangs and terrorists to prevent receiving good services by the government. For the past few weeks, the ministers and the ministries in the government exerted a lot of effort in carrying out several exceptional campaigns for the people in Sadr City. And the Ministry of Trade managed to

provide the food rations for April and for next month as well. The Ministry of Health provided medicine and now what is present in the hospitals in Sadr City represents 80% of the needs. And this is a really good number compared with what we used to suffer...what they used to suffer from in those hospitals in the past. The terrorist groups now closed more than six clinics inside the city and they threatened those who work in those clinics. And they carried out terrorist actions near those clinics which makes the area near those clinics really dangerous. That's why we find that there are six clinics inside Sadr City and even the hospital in Habibiya area—they are not working. But we are determined to restore the services in those places and clinics and hospitals. There are 86 schools that are still not going on with their work. And this is due to the threat that is being made to their staff or the threat that is made to the family so that they will not send their children to those schools. And some of those schools are being used as bases for conducting operations against our people in other areas. And this, of course, is a dangerous thing and the Ministry of Education took this into consideration. We cannot allow that our students stop going to school and especially you know that the examination now is getting close. We are now in April and the examination now will start in May and June and this is actually a burden to those students in finishing their curriculums. That's why there is more than one

solution to present support and help for those students. The Iraqi government allocated \$150 million and formed a committee from the executive directors at the...from Sadr City and also it included the city councils in Sadr City and this is to provide the best social, economic services to the people and also to raise the level of those basic services. Yes, we have good intentions. We have money. But, unfortunately, there are some people who try to hinder this process of providing the services to the people. The food ration and the convoys are being targeted with IEDs and the warehouses of the food rations are being targeted. The blood...also the ambulances are being targeted with IEDs. And the vehicles that try to replace the generators in some of the sectors are also being targeted by those terrorists. Most of the vital areas were influenced due to these operations. There was an attempt by the Ministry of Oil to send oil to the people and gas to the people in Sadr City. And we have sent 77 vehicles carrying oil and only 22 managed to enter the city. They tried to intervene and intercept those...and steal those vehicles. This is an act against the people. That's why the government decided to continue eliminating those gangs and rid the society of them. We have several projects that are actually being carried out outside Sadr City and which influence Sadr City itself. We have the opera... Project Afour[?] in Sadr City to provide water...potable water to the people. And there is also a station...power plant station in

Eastern Baghdad in Al Kanat area. And in the same time there's also a commanding operation for the reconstruction for Sadr City will be formed and this commanding...or this operation will also set priorities to the projects for...allocated for Sadr City because you know the people in Sadr City suffered a lot from the criminal gangs inside their neighborhoods. I will now give space to General Bergner and he has some comments and notes about reconstruction in Eastern Baghdad. General.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Shukran jaziilan, Dr. Sheikhly. Good afternoon everyone. I'll talk briefly about events in Iraq and other places besides Baghdad and then come back to a quick update on the situation here. Even though Iraq has seen significant progress in the past year, it is still engaged in a tough fight against extremists who are limiting the Iraqi people from achieving the full measure of security and prosperity that their country is capable of achieving. While this remains a tough fight, one key difference today is the majority of the Iraqi people are rejecting the violence that has plagued their neighborhoods and they are rejecting the extremists who incite this violence. We are increasingly...we increasingly see a commitment to economic development and reconstruction and that is the path that leads to a prosperity and the broadest opportunity for all Iraqis to share in it.

In places where Iraqi citizens have rejected violence we are seeing people returning to their homes, rebuilding their lives, and capitalizing on improving conditions in terms of security. Earlier this week we received reports from south of Baghdad that residents from Yusufiyah, Mahmudiyah, Lutifiyah, and several other neighboring villages are returning home. In these areas where al-Qaeda – Iraq had entrenched itself and driven residents out of their homes in fear over the course of the last year, more than 10,000 residents of the 18,000 who are estimated to have left these villages have now returned. In Al Zatia, Nahrwan, a local Iraqi company, recently finished the construction of two windmills. This is an innovation of a local proprietor to pump water from wells for drinking water and the irrigation of nearby fields. The project now provides water for 150 local families in that community. In Iskandariyah, an area formerly known as the “Triangle of Death”, local citizens are rebuilding fish farms and hatcheries with the help of micro loans. This industry—destroyed by al-Qaeda—is steadily reviving and providing employment for many local residents. East of Salman Pak, other agriculture sectors are also being revitalized. An agriculture exposition sponsored by the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture showed recent growth in beekeeping and honey production, new techniques in land management, and programs for date palm inoculation. In fact, the Government of Iraq has

completed the date palm aerial spraying in Babil Province which comprises about 37% of the crop that's to be treated this year by aerial spraying. These civilian crop spraying efforts, using civilian pilots and civilian aircraft, are administered by the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. Even as these programs go forward, we remain on the offense against al-Qaeda to keep pressuring its network and limit the opportunity to establish safe havens or operating bases. Iraqi security forces and the Sons of Iraq are increasingly the first line of defense in this campaign. In that regard, on Tuesday, al-Qaeda – Iraq terrorists attacked a small village near Baqubah. However, the al-Qaeda attack was defeated when the Sons of Iraq, acting as a first line of defense, fended off the terrorists long enough for a quick response force from the Iraqi security forces to join the fight and launch a counteroffensive that killed 12 terrorists. In the process, one member of the Sons of Iraq was killed and several were wounded in this defense of their community. On Monday coalition forces targeted al-Qaeda – Iraq terrorists in three separate locations near Baghdad. In one suburb of the Iraqi capitol, coalition forces engaged two vehicles that were carrying four heavy machine guns, several al-Qaeda terrorists, and a foreign terrorist linked to suicide bomber cells. Ten terrorists were killed and both vehicles were destroyed in the engagement. And later that day five other terrorists were detained in different operations in Baghdad as well. We are

continuing to pursue al-Qaeda terrorists, targeting their leaders, disrupting their lines of communication, and denying them safe havens in Iraq. Over the past several weeks, as you know, the criminal groups increased rocket and mortar attacks against innocent Iraqi civilians, the Government of Iraq, and both Iraqi and coalition forces. These indirect fire attacks have killed some 40 people in Baghdad with some 370 others injured. The map on the screen depicts the launch sites of rockets launched in Baghdad on Sunday—this is just one day—on Sunday's actual attacks. As you can see, the majority were fired from areas inside of Sadr City. We are responding appropriately to these lethal attacks. As we do so, we use precision strikes and take every precaution to limit the damage. The fact that the nature of these criminals is to operate within civilian neighborhoods and, thereby, place innocent civilians at risk, makes this a complex and difficult challenge whether in Basra, Baghdad, or other communities. What you are watching is a video that took place on the 11th of April in Basra as security forces identified a group of people congregating on a street at 2:00 in the morning. After a couple of hours of surveillance it became clear that they were part of a mortar team that emplaced and fired a mortar at ground forces. And you can, indeed, see the flashes as they walk back out to the mortar with more ammunition and drop the mortar round in and then it fires again when they walk back to

try to get ammunition. After having been positively identified as a mortar crew, you'll see that they were engaged by coalition forces which destroyed that part of the mortar crew. In the next series of frames you'll see that there was another group of individuals returning to the site to retrieve the rest of the equipment associated with that mortar tube. And after tracking them and carefully monitoring them, coalition forces engaged that group as they were seeking to pick up the rest of their equipment. On April 27th in Sadr City, two individuals were also observed loading weapons into the trunk of a vehicle. They were, likewise, kept under surveillance to confirm exactly what the nature of the activity was, to confirm what was involved, and they were kept under surveillance as well until the vehicle is in a position that could be...that it could be engaged in such a way that limits the likelihood of damage to others. And as you can see here, the same vehicle is pulling away from the houses that it was next to and as it pulls up the street and turns around it continued to be under the surveillance of the aerial platform. And at that point it was engaged by coalition forces. These examples reflect the precision and the precautions being taken to engage only those who are launching attacks, those who are placing civilians and neighborhoods at risk both at the launch point and the areas in which the rockets are impacting. In addition to the operations against these criminal elements and the operations to emplace better

security barriers, the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi Army's 11th Division in coordination with Multi-National Division – Baghdad have established a combined civil military operations center that Dr. Sheikhly referred to in his remarks. And as he mentioned, this combined effort provides a central point for residents...for citizens of Thawra to process claims, request essential services, and apply for aid. It also coordinates reconstruction projects for the district including those described by Dr. Sheikhly. The short-term projects for the next 30 days include street lighting, trash and rubble removal, sewage disposal, distribution of food rations, provision of medical supplies, and the delivery of small generators and reconstruction supplies. All of this is a coalition effort in support of the broader effort that the Government of Iraq has committed to and is undertaking on the local level. Over the next 90 days this combined effort will coordinate longer term projects to refurbish three medical clinics, to revitalize the Jamilah Wholesale Food Market, to issue micro loans to businesses, and to renovate schools. By coordinating these projects, this civil-military operations center—this combined effort by the Government of Iraq and coalition forces—will expedite some \$2.5 million worth of aid and reconstruction investments. And it will again, as I said, be in...begin in the secure areas of Thawra. This is the first installment of what has already been announced as a much larger scale

Government of Iraq investment to help reconstruct and help put citizens back on their feet. And with that I'd like to thank Dr. Sheikhly again for the invitation to participate today and I will defer to you to take questions.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Okay.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Shukran jaziilan.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran jaziilan. Thank you very much. [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP1:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Question from Radio Sawa. I have two questions. Dr Tahseen Al-Sheikhly, there has been a statement that there is an intention by the government to form a support committee in...for Sadr City. Where are you now about this? And the second question to Major General Bergner. Yesterday there has been or a video was shown and the combined...the Iraqi and the American forces were accused of killing members of the Sadr Trend in Al-Nasiriyah; and is this true? Is this video true that shows....

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, let me allow you...allow me to answer this question. The Iraqi people should know that all the institutes in the government now are working to...for a certain thing that is to enforce the law and, at the same time, to save our people in Sadr City from the criminal gangs that try to impose this siege over them. Part of this institute is the Follow-up Committee for the National Reconciliation which is undertaking certain missions that is cooperating with the Ministry of Social and the tribes in Sadr City so that they could provide a mechanism to provide anything that enhances the relationship in this...inside this community. Our people there are suffering and we are required to present several things; one of them is responsibility and this is required from us. The support committee is part of this and there are several other steps like providing job opportunities through...and this is what is being done through the National Reconciliation Committee. And also we work on enhancing the role of the social leaders so that we can drive away the influence of the criminal gangs in Sadr City.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

The coalition forces are working very closely with Iraqi security forces to help the Government of Iraq enforce the rule of law. And

that is our mandate; that is our responsibility; and those are...that is the basis for the actions that we take. And I haven't seen the video that you are referring to but I can tell you that coalition forces and the Iraqi security forces have great respect for the citizens of An Nasiriyah. We work closely with the security forces there. And I'm not aware of any truth or any basis of fact that would suggest that the coalition or Iraqi security forces are doing anything other than enforcing the rule of law in their operations there. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP2:

Ahmed Jassem. [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Question to General Bergner. If the Iraqi government demanded the withdrawal of the American troops from Sadr City and...would you approve that? And the second question to Dr. Tahseen Al-Sheikhly. We have talked about the Iranian interference in Iraq. So how far or those things are true that there are...the supplies that go inside Sadr City are actually coming from Iran? And how actually they are coming inside Sadr City? How do they enter Iraq and Baghdad especially so that they can go inside Sadr City?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Shall I start?

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

Yes.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Shukran. Our operations are in support of the Government of Iraq's commitment to help restore the rule of law and we are working closely with the Iraqi security forces in that operation. Iraqi security forces throughout Baghdad, really, under the leadership of General Abud and the Baghdad Operational Command. And so the Baghdad Operational Command and coalition forces are very much a partnership in our efforts here. And we...those operations are closely coordinated and with a great deal of guidance and direction provided by the Government of Iraq. And so we continue to respect the Government of Iraq's direction and guidance in the course of those operations and we will continue to respect that as well. Shukran.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

Thank you. [Continues speaking in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, I only talk about the services and this is what my specialty is in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon so I have nothing to do with what you said. But as an Iraqi citizen in the same time, when I see that

there are some Iranian-made weapons in Basra and Sadr City and the Iraqis are being targeted by those weapons, I can't target a certain side.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Hiba[ph] Agency. Previous press conference...Major General Qassim Atta said that the entries in Sadr City were opened but the delegation from the Council of Representative[s] who went there, they confirmed that these entries are actually closed. So what is your comment about this?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, I hope there is someone in Sadr City here now and he could tell us about this. There are actually three...there are not three but six entries; three are open and in...one in Jamilah and one in Madafur Square and one in Hamza Square and all those things are open—those entries. If you would like to go there and see for yourself we will be happy to go and show you. And if there is anyone from Sadr City now he could tell you about this.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran jaziilan. Yes.

REP4:

Hi. [Unintelligible] BBC. You're very careful—both of you—to refer to the people you are fighting in Sadr City as criminal gangs. But I wonder if you could be a bit more specific about precisely who you are fighting? And maybe tell us some sorts of characterization of what the fighting is. Are you going in house to house, street by street, or are you just reacting to attacks from these groups?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

May I answer, please?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Sure. Please go ahead.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, at the beginning the Iraqi government and it announced and said several times that the Iraqi government is targeting only the armed groups that carry weapon[s] and that try to impose itself or themselves as a parallel force to the force or the authority of the government and those who try to influence the security of the

community. We are not targeting any political trend or any political side or any party. If there is anyone who is trying to mix things so we have to look for interests. We target those who carry weapon and those who harm the Iraqi people. I think the government was clear ever since the first day from Operation Charge...of the Nights[?] and even in the other security operations in Baghdad and the other provinces. And I think General Bergner will also add about this.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

I think I could say Taban[ph].

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

[laughs]

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

It is...I think Dr. Sheikhly said that very well. This is focused on the criminal groups—those who are using the force of arms outside of the Government of Iraq—and they are endangering not only those who live in Sadr City, but they are endangering innocent Iraqis in many neighborhoods in Baghdad. And so our operations are an appropriate response to that threat that exists. Shukran.

DR. AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP5:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I have two questions. In your opinion, do you think the crisis ends in Sadr City or will end soon? Do you think it will end tomorrow or the day after or do you think it will continue for two, three months? This is the first question. The second question: does the...or do the coalition forces have a really effective role in this operation, let's say, as a peaceful role or to find a peaceful solution or just to...?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

At the beginning we have to realize that what's going on is the plan set by the government. I don't think that there is a single Iraqi who could accept that there is a force that carry weapon. And, as you can see as media and you go watch those things and you show to the people, those people have those kinds of weapon and about this size and this could endanger the people...the Iraqi people and our children and they take the schools as base to launch their rockets on the Ministry of Interior and Palestine Street. And they occupy...and their snipers occupy the roofs of one of the hospitals so they can target the Iraqi forces and the children and accuse the Iraqi forces of

doing that. And those who prevent the blood donations that are going to the hospitals. And those who prevent sending the surgical devices to the people who need them in Sadr City. So it's, of course, because you know there are so many people who are sick in Sadr City. So the...everything is being targeted: the medicine, the food. So I don't think there is a timetable for all this. I can't tell you that this will end tomorrow or the day after. They will end when those aspects for violence end. The government is determined. There is not only an intention but a good determination also to achieve this but...and the coalition forces are friendly forces and they are friends to achieve security. We are in the process of building our forces so that our forces could fight terrorism with all its levels and aspects like the criminal gangs. And we do need...and thank the coalition forces for their help. At least we need them so that they could provide security to the people and children of Iraq.

REP6: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Zaman Newspaper. A few days ago a delegation from the Parliament visited Sadr City and they confirmed that there are no services provided to Sadr City and the situation is so tragic and there are some American snipers are everywhere and they are targeting everyone. So how would you respond about this? The

second question. And what are the numbers of the detainees and the arrested people from the armed men in Sadr City?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I'll give you the numbers. MNF-Baghdad carried out four campaigns to remove the trash in April 22 and 28 and 27. This is concerning the trash...removing the trash. And we have 22 vehicles carrying the oil and gas enter the city. And until yesterday, we have a tanker loaded with gas...with gas canisters and they entered Sadr City so that...as part of the basic services to provide it to the people. The food ration for April has been distributed...rations has been distri-...was distributed also to the people. And the contents of food rations in May is ready except for some of the materials that are actually now in the labs to be tested and—because we need to test those food until we give them to the people. So we are now carrying out this testing and in a few days those food rations will be given—for May, that is. Until now we have 2,600 wounded and 980 martyrs in Sadr City. And all those people receive...all receive the medicine and according to the reports that I have until I receive...until this morning, 80% of the needs regarding the medicine and the treatment and even the surgical end...that is the surgical operation is present and is being given in the hospital in

Sadr City. So what are the basic services that you are talking about? General Bergner said that there are some projects for electricity and projects to give them with generators. Yes, in Sadr City there are some places that we cannot reach and there are some generators that are actually not working. And some of the criminal gangs sometimes—and I hope I could show you that—they come target the generators and cut the wires and the power lines. And as you know, there are some children who suffer because of the heat in such weather. So this is the kind of services that we are trying to provide. And, as you can see, that's the kind of thing and actions that the terrorists are trying to do against the people there.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Question to General Bergner. It's been a month since the operation in Sadr City started. Could you tell us about the achievements that you have made...or the Iraqi and the American forces made in Sadr City in fighting the criminal and the armed groups?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Well, I think I will start by going back to what Dr. Sheikhly was just talking about. There has been an enormous effort by the Government of Iraq, supported by the coalition forces, to help

provide for the needs of the citizens in Sadr City.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Yes.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Despite the criminal groups, despite the attacks that they have continued to mount, there has been a coordinated and a concerted effort to keep pushing medical supplies, food, water, fuel—all the basic needs for subsistence—despite the activities of these groups that continue to incite violence. At the same time, security forces...Government of Iraq security forces have improved the security posture around the city in such a way that they can reduce the influence of the armed groups, reduce their access to weapons, and take an appropriate response to the indirect fire that has killed some 40 people in Baghdad and wounded 370 others during the course of the period you just described. And so we continue to help the Government of Iraq improve the security situation, take the appropriate responses to the violence that's being perpetrated by these armed groups, and at the same time assist in the provision of services in a very difficult environment that's created by these armed groups which I think the Government of Iraq has shown their commitment to as well. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. Thank you. [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP8:

This is for General Bergner. Howard LaFrankie[ph] with The Christian Science Monitor. General, April has seen the highest number of casualties among U.S. troops since September and I'm wondering what you attribute that rise to?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Well, we have said all along, this will be a tough fight and there will be periods where we see the extremists—these criminal groups and al-Qaeda terrorists—seek to reassert themselves and reignite violence for their own purposes. And so the sacrifice of our troopers, the sacrifice of the Iraqi forces and the Iraqi citizens reflects this challenge of these groups seeking to reassert themselves. And that is what our concerted effort is focused on is keeping al-Qaeda from being able to re-establish safe havens and operating bases, keeping the pressure on their networks, maintaining the offense, if you will, against the al-Qaeda networks, to disrupt them and keep their leaders from being able to achieve the freedom of action, freedom of movement that they need to conduct their operations and, at the same time, work closely with the Government of Iraq against these special groups criminals and other extremists who are seeking to destabilize the security situation

here and in other places.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Thank you. [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP9:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Biladi TV. Alek[ph] Fran[ph]. Biladi TV. After the warning by Muqtada al-Sadr to launch an open war against the American and Iraqi forces in case the clashes continues and the siege continues in Sadr City, do you expect and aren't you afraid of this threatening and this could hap-...because this could lead to a disaster in Iraq?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, we don't want to talk about this in the wrong way. We respect...we have great respect to Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr and he's a patriot person. And when he talks about those things so he does not mean an open war against the government. This is a well-known thing. All the politicians and all those who work in politics and the political process now approve. And I don't think everyone[sic] agrees that there is no force that is parallel to the force of the government. We are seeking to build a government of institutes and a government of law. We have to believe that there is a government

of law and so that we...so we cannot allow the presence of any criminal groups that control things in the back streets in our city so they could influence the security and safety of the people and also in the community in general. This...such things could not continue and the people who live in those places and the places that those armed groups try to control, they can't go on suffering forever. There should be an intervene...someone should intervene and a positive one, that is. Prime Minister Maliki said today we don't need military troops in Sadr City. We need special troops to deal with those people; the special troops that eliminate those groups that actually are present in Sadr City. Meaning we're...that said, we're not launching an offensive operation against the city but we are targeting all those who carry [a] weapon.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Yes, please.

REP10:

Alexandra Zavis from The Los Angeles Times. Given the scale of the attacks that you've encountered in recent weeks in Sadr City, can you really continue making this distinction between the forces loyal to Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr and the special groups? When we talked to members of the Mahdi Army, a lot of them feel that the most recent instructions that they've received actually authorize

attacks against particularly coalition forces and even Iraqi forces if they are working together.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I would like to say, again, that our policy and our main goal is the armed groups that try to or actually carry a weapon and use them against our...the Iraqi people. We are not targeting any side, any political side or trend or any Iraqi citizen.

REP11:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Question from Radio Sawa. A week ago there was a conference for the commanding operation, General Abud[ph] Gumber[ph], and he said that the joint forces control one-third of Sadr City in Jamilah area and other places. Currently the operations...the military operations that are being conducted—where are they? Could you give us details about this? And do you have statistics for those who have been detained and from the armed groups, that is?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

And the number of those...the death toll of those armed groups, I

think General Bergner could give you a better answer for this. He's better...he has a better knowledge for the combat operations.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Yeah. The focus of operations has been targeting those groups and those weapons systems that are killing innocent Iraqi people, endangering the Iraqi seat of government, and endangering numerous neighborhoods in Baghdad. And so we have undertaken a number of precision strikes specifically targeting...appropriately targeting those individuals that are launching mortars and rockets into neighborhoods in Baghdad. At the same time, coalition forces have sought to improve the security in the southwestern part of Sadr City in the area that Dr. Sheikhly referred to earlier. And they have done that to help expand the availability of services and reduce the prospects of that area being used to launch mortar and indirect fire attacks into other neighborhoods of Baghdad. And then, at the same time, there is an important effort to ensure the freedom of movement of the food, fuel, water, and the other important elements of subsistence to the Iraqi people. And at the same time, ensure that there aren't weapons being transported and fighters and other illegal traffic underway. So that has been the focus of the Iraqi operations that the coalition forces continue to support. Shukran.

REP11: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Could you give us the number of the detained and the death toll from the armed forces...armed groups?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: We will get you the best current accounting that we have and I'll get that for you after the press conference. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

REP12: Katy[ph] Arran[ph] from National Public Radio. You're using some really serious weapons over there; you have Stryker armored vehicles and Army missile systems. This is a question for General Bergner. Why is it necessary to use such serious weapons? And isn't it...doesn't that counteract the counterinsurgency doctrine?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Well, first of all, the techniques, the tactics, and the actual systems that are being used are directly proportional to the circumstance that our soldiers are finding themselves in. And, for example, yesterday—in the process of trying to improve the security in the southwest part of the city and installing security barriers—they were taken under intense small-arms fire, rocket-propelled

grenades, heavy machine guns, and multiple improvised explosive devices. That's the level of engagement that is...that our troops are frequently exposed to in this...in these operations. And so their need for Stryker combat vehicles and the need to respond to those kinds of attacks is what leads to the use of those weapons systems. Directly though, I would say, appropriate to the kind of threats to our forces.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Last question. [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Last question.

REP13:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Question to General Bergner. A representative from the Sadr Trend confirmed that the American forces used banned...internationally banned weapons in the military operations in Sadr City. What is your comment about this?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

We absolutely do not use any internationally banned weapons. And as I've said all along, we have used the necessary level of force with great precautions and great precision as much as is possible to ensure that the effects of those weapons are limited to the threats

that they are targeted against. And remember, this is a circumstance where these criminal groups are operating from...directly out of civilian neighborhoods. They're putting themselves next to municipal buildings and, as I showed you in those video clips, they are using the civilian population to locate themselves in and among. And so it makes this a very complex and very difficult challenge for the coalition forces, but one which we take tre-...with great seriousness and great concern and respect in doing the very best we can to limit the effects of those weapons to the threats that are targeting innocent Iraqi neighborhoods, Iraqi civilians, the seat of government and, really, targeting those who are trying to deliver aid and assistance to the citizens who deeply want that aid and assistance. Shukran jaziilan.

DR AL-SHEIHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I'd like to also follow up one thing that those who prevent food and support to the people and those who try to provide services to the people, do you think they will use internationally banned weapons?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Shukran jaziilan and thank you very much to my friend, Dr. Sheikhly, a great patriot and courageous leader in Iraq. Shukran.

